

U.S. COAST GUARD CUTTER TANEY
(WPG/WHEC-37)
Pier 5, Pratt Street
Baltimore
Independent City
Maryland

HAER MD-134
MD-134

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter TANEY (WPG/WHEC-37)

HAER No. MD-134

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| Rig/Type of Craft: | cutter |
| Trade: | coastal defense |
| Official No.: | WPG/WHEC-37 |
| Principal Dimensions: | Length: 327 ft. Draft: 12 ft. 6 in. Beam: 41 ft. Displacement: 2700 tons |
| Location: | Pier 5, Pratt Street. Baltimore City, Maryland |
| Date of Construction: | 1936 |
| Designer: | United States Coast Guard |
| Builder: | Philadelphia Navy Yard |
| Original Owner: | United States Coast Guard |
| Present Owner: | National Historic Seaport/Baltimore Maritime Museum |
| Present Use: | Museum |
| Significance: | The U.S. Coast Cutter TANEY was commissioned by the United States Coast Guard in 1936 and served the American public for 50 years, including distinguished service during World War II. The TANEY is the last surviving warship of the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor still afloat. |
| Historian: | Kristen M. O'Connell |

Project
Information:

The 2003 documentation of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter TANEY is part of the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Richard O'Connor, Acting Chief.

This project was done under the direction of Todd Croteau, HAER Maritime Program Coordinator. Photographs were taken by Jet Lowe.

The cutter TANEY, originally launched as the *Roger B. Taney*, was named for Roger Brooke Taney, who was born on 17 March 1777 in Calvert County, Maryland. He studied law at Annapolis, Maryland and was admitted to the Maryland bar in 1799. In 1831 he was appointed US Attorney General then later received an appointment as Secretary of the Treasury.¹

On 28 December 1835, President Jackson picked Taney to succeed John Marshall as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.² During his time on the bench, Taney gave his opinions in many cases in which he generally upheld states rights and narrowly construed the Constitution's grant of powers to the Federal Government. His most famous case was that of *Dred Scott vs. Sanford*.³ Justice Taney died in Washington, D.C., on 12 October 1864.

The TANEY was one of three 327-foot cutters originally designed and built to meet changing missions of the service as it emerged from the Prohibition era.⁴ Because the air passenger trade was expanding both at home and overseas, the Coast Guard believed that cutter-based aircraft would be essential for future high-seas search and rescue. Also, during the mid-1930's, narcotics smuggling, mostly opium, was on the increase, and 'long-legged', fast cutters were needed to curtail it. The 327s were an attempt to develop a 20-knot cutter capable of carrying an airplane in a hanger.⁵ The aircraft hanger, however, was omitted in the final design.

¹ www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/WEBCUTTERS/Taney_1936.html

² Carl Brent Swisher, *Roger B. Taney* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1961), 39.

³ *Ibid*, 489.

⁴ www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/Cutter_index.html

⁵ Robert L. Scheina, *US Coast Guard Cutters and Craft 1946-1990* (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1990), 13.

A preliminary design married these desires to a 250-foot cutter. The resulting design was a very broad, very deep cutter. Concurrently the Navy was developing a 20-knot, 2,000-ton design. The Coast Guard chose to go with the Navy design and heavily modified it. The final 327-foot design was based on the Erie-class Navy gunboats; the machinery plant and hull below the water line were identical. This standardization would save money – always paramount in the Coast Guard’s mind, as the cutters were built in U.S. Navy shipbuilding yards. Thirty-two preliminary designs based upon the Erie class were drawn up before one was finally selected. The healthy sheer forward and the high slope in the deck in the wardrooms were known as the “Hunnewell Hump.” Commander (Constructor) F.G. Hunnewell, USCG, was the head of the Construction and Repair Department at that time.⁶

These cutters were built 327 feet long with a beam of 41 feet. They had a mean draft of 12 feet 6 inches and displaced 2,350 tons on initial sea trials. With the addition of equipment over the years, at the time of decommissioning the TANEY displaced over 2,700 tons. The cutters were steam powered and equipped with two Westinghouse double-reduction geared turbines and two Babcock and Wilson 400 psi, 200 degree, oil-fired, superheated boilers. The 327’s initially tested out at 5,250 shaft horsepower transferred to twin 3-blade propellers and they were capable of a maximum speed of just over twenty knots. The TANEY’s hull was constructed of 3/8 inch specially treated overlapping welded steel plates.⁷

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Brian J. Whetstone, *The Roger B.: The History of the USCGC TANEY* (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1993) 12; Robert L. Scheina, *US Coast Guard Cutters and Craft 1946-1990*, 28.

The Secretary class cutters, of which there were seven total built between 1935 and 1938 and all named for former Secretary's of the Treasury (USCG TANNEY, USCG INGHAM, USCG CAMPBELL, USCG SPENCER, USCG DUANE, USCG BIBB, AND USCG HAMILTON), proved to be highly adaptable, dependable, versatile and long-lived warships – most served their country for over 40 years.⁸ The initial impressions of these ships were not entirely favorable. It was thought they were too large for most cutter duties and that they lacked the towing capability of the popular Lake Class. Their twin screws, which made them easier to handle, were extremely vulnerable to damage when working in ice.⁹ However, they went on to serve as amphibious task force flagships, as search-and-rescue (SAR) ships during the Korean War, on weather patrol, and as naval gunfire support ships during Vietnam. Most recently, these ships have done duty in fisheries patrol and drug interdiction.

Roger B. Taney, Coast Guard Builders No. 68, was laid down on 1 May 1935 at the Philadelphia Navy Yard. She was launched on 3 June 1936 and was sponsored by Miss Corinne F. Taney, Chief Justice Taney's great-grandniece. She was commissioned at Philadelphia on 24 October 1936 under the command of CDR Eugene A. Coffin.¹⁰ *Roger B. Taney* departed Philadelphia on 19 December, transited the Panama Canal from the 27th to the 29th, and arrived at her homeport, Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, on 18 January 1937. She conducted local operations out of Honolulu until the summer of 1937. In March she was detailed to station 200 miles northeast of Honolulu to act as a beacon on the San Francisco to Honolulu leg of Amelia Earhart's first attempt at an around the

⁸ http://www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/Cutter_index.html

⁹ Robert Erwin Johnson, *Guardian of the Sea: History of the United States Coast Guard, 1915 to the Present* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1987), 154.

¹⁰ Brian J. Whetstone, *The Roger B.*, 7.

world flight. On June 16, 1937, she transferred a number of her crew for temporary duty to the CGC *Itasca*. The *Itasca* was preparing to lend navigational support to Amelia Earhart's. In July the TANEY was given permission to cooperate in the search for Earhart's missing plane.¹¹

Roger B. Taney had arrived in the Pacific at a time when the United States, and Pan-American Airways in particular, was expanding its commercial air travel capabilities. The "Clipper" flights across the Pacific to the Far East made islands like Hawaii, Midway, Guam, and Wake important stations.¹² Other islands and islets assumed greater importance when a route across the South Pacific was mapped out to Australia and Samoa. The military benefits which accrued to the United States by its expansion onto some of the more strategic bits of land in the broad Pacific were not lost upon President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who undertook, in the late 1930's, to annex territory in the Pacific.¹³

Two such places were Canton and Enderbury Islands. *Roger B. Taney* played a role in their colonization by the United States. In early March 1938, the Coast Guard cutter loaded supplies and embarked colonists who would establish the claim of the United States upon the two islands that seemed – at least to the uninitiated – to be mere hunks of coral, rock, and scrub in the Central Pacific. *Roger B. Taney* disembarked four Hawaiians at Enderbury Island on 6 March 1938 and landed a second contingent – of

¹¹ United States Coast Guard Official Dispatch, 13 March 1937 and 2 July 1937. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. General Correspondence 1910-41. 601 – Scope of Operations, Box 484 (Tallapoosa to Taney), Entry 283B. National Archives of the United States. For more information on the TANEY's operational history, please refer to Brian J. Whetstone, *The Roger B.: A History of the USCGC TANEY* (Dallas, TX: Taylor Publishing Company, 1993).

¹² "U.S. Coast Guard Cutter TANEY Story" Copy from Archives housed aboard the USCGC TANEY. Pier 5. Baltimore, MD.

¹³ "Fighting Ships of the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II." *Sea Classics*. 1986, Volume 2.

seven colonists – at Canton Island on the next day. The men, assisted by the Coast Guardsmen, erected buildings and laid the foundations for future signal towers.¹⁴

The Coast Guard's task over the ensuing years leading up to the outbreak of war in the Pacific was to supply these isolated way stations along the transpacific air routes and to relieve the colonists at stated intervals.¹⁵ *Roger B. Taney* performed these supply missions into 1940.

As the Navy and Coast Guard began gradually increasing and augmenting the armament on its vessels to prepare them for the inexorably advancing war, *Roger B. Taney* underwent her first major rearmament at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard in December 1940.¹⁶ She received her last major pre-war refit at the Mare Island Navy Yard, Vallejo, California, in the spring of the following year, 1941. These two re-armaments focused on upgrading the ships anti-aircraft and anti-submarine weapons, as well as increasing the main armament to three 5"51 caliber guns. On 25 July 1941, the Coast Guard cutter was transferred to the Navy and reported for duty with the local defense forces of the 14th Naval District maintaining her base at Honolulu. By this time, the ship's name was shortened to TANEY.¹⁷

Outside of another "Line Island cruise" in the late summer, TANEY operated locally out of Honolulu into the critical fall of 1941. She conducted regular harbor entrance and channel patrols, alternating often with one of the four old destroyers of

¹⁴ USCGC TANEY Ships Log, March 1938. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. Logs of Revenue Cutters and Coast Guard Vessels, 1891-1941. TANEY 1938 Box 2397 NC31 Entry 159A. Page 7. National Archives of the United States.

¹⁵ RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. National Archives of the United States.

¹⁶ Order of Work – Sheet #1. 27 January 1941. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. General Correspondence, 1910-1941. 601.Scope of Operations, Tallapoosa to Taney. Box 484 Entry 283B. National Archives of the United States.

¹⁷ Dr. Robert Browning, "The Day that Lives in Infamy: The Coast Guard at Pearl Harbor." *U.S. Coast Guard Reservist*. December 1999.

Destroyer Division 80: *Allen* (DD-66), *Sehley* (DD-103), *Chew* (DD-106), and *Ward* (DD-139). The message: “Air Raid, Pearl Harbor. This is no drill” came at 0755 on 7 December, as Japanese planes swept overhead in an attempt to cripple the Pacific Fleet.¹⁸

While the TANEY did not participate in the initial attacks by the Japanese, they did enter into the fray with the second phase. Just after 9am, after the second wave of planes began their attack, the TANEY fired on some scattering formation of high altitude enemy aircraft with its 3-inch guns and 50-caliber machine guns. The extreme range of the bombers limited the effect of the fire and the guns were secured after 20 minutes. According to a report filed by TANEY’s commanding officer during Pearl Harbor, CDR Louis B. Olson, 27 rounds of three-inch shrapnel were fired from TANEY during these attacks. TANEY is also credited with preventing the destruction of the Honolulu Power plant by successfully fending off a five-plane glide bombing run against the plant.¹⁹

TANEY patrolled the waters off Honolulu for the remainder of 1941 and into 1942, conducting many depth charge attacks on suspected submarines in the wake of the Pearl Harbor attack. On 22 January 1942, the cutter departed Honolulu in company with SS *Barbara Olson*, and arrived at Canton Island on the 28th.²⁰ After sending a working party ashore to unload supplies, TANEY screened *Barbara Olson* offshore until 7 February, when both ships got underway to evacuate the American colony on Enderbury Island. Embarking the four colonists at 1015 that day, TANEY shelled the island and destroyed the buildings there before sailing for Jarvis Island. TANEY subsequently

¹⁸ Brian J. Whetstone, *The Roger B: A History of the USCGC TANEY* (Dallas: Taylor Publishing Co., 1993), 31.

¹⁹ Browning, “The Day that Lives in Infamy.”

²⁰ USCGC TANEY Ships Log, January 1938. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. Logs of Revenue Cutters and Coast Guard Vessels, 1891-1941. TANEY 1941-1942. Box No. 2400 NC31 Entry 159A. National Archives of the United States.

escorted her merchantman consort to Jarvis Island, where she evacuated the four Interior Department colonists and burned all structures to the ground before departing. Reaching Palmyra on the 12th, the ships remained there until the 15th, before TANEY headed back for the Hawaiian Islands, arriving at Honolulu on 5 March.²¹

TANEY operated locally out of Honolulu into 1943 before sailing for Boston late that winter. Prior to heading for the east coast, the ship received a re-gunning at Mare Island, being fitted with four single enclosed-mount 5-inch 38-caliber guns, making her the only ship in her class with this modification. After making port at Boston on 14 March 1944, TANEY soon shifted south to Hampton Roads, where she arrived on 31 March. Early in April, she departed Norfolk as a Unit of Task Force (TF) 66, US Atlantic Fleet as convoy guide for escort UGS-38. Throughout her 1944 Atlantic and Mediterranean operations, the TANEY was the flagship of this Task Force.²²

The Coast Guard cutter conducted two more round-trip convoy escort missions, with convoys UGS/GUS-45 and UGS/GUS-52. Detached as a unit of TF 66 on 9 October 1944, *Taney* sailed for the Boston Navy Yard soon thereafter for extensive yard work to convert her to an amphibious command ship. During this Metamorphosis, TANEY – classified as WAGC-37 – was fitted with accommodations for an embarked flag officer and his staff, as well as with increased communications and radar facilities. Her main battery, too, underwent change: she now sported two open-mount 5-inch guns,

²¹ USCGC TANEY War Diaries. February and March 1942. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. Office of Commandant. Public Relations Division – Historical Section. Ship and Unit War Diaries, 1942-45. TAHOMA 10/1943 - TANEY. Box No. 45, MLR AI 186, N3-26-86-3. National Archives of the United States.

²² www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/WEBCUTTERS/Taney_1936.html

as well as 40 and 20-millimeter antiaircraft guns. With the work completed in early January 1945, TANEY departed Boston on 19 January, bound for Norfolk, VA.²³

She conducted shakedown training in her new configuration before departing the east coast and sailing, via the Panama Canal and San Diego, to Hawaii. She arrived at Pearl Harbor on 22 February 1945.²⁴ New communications equipment was also installed before the ship departed the Hawaiian Islands for the Marshalls on 10 March.

By the end of May, TANEY had gone to general quarters 119 times, with the crew remaining at battle stations for up to nine hours at a stretch. During this period off Okinawa in April and May, TANEY downed four suicide planes and assisted in numerous other “kills.” The command ship also conducted combat information center duties, maintaining complete radar and air coverage, receiving and evaluating information on both friendly and enemy activities.²⁵

Suicide air attacks by the Japanese continued throughout June, although most were intercepted by combat air patrol (CAP) fighters and downed before they could reach their targets. Such raids took place on 18 out of 30 days that month. On one occasion, TANEY’s duties took her inshore close enough to receive fire from a Japanese shore battery. On 25 June, at 0120, a float seaplane passed near *Taney*, provoking return fire from the command ship and batteries ashore which combined to splash the intruder.

²³ Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft of World War II* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1982), 15.

²⁴ USCGC TANEY Ships Log, January-February 1945. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. Logs of Revenue Cutters and Coast Guard Vessels, 1945. TANEY 1945. Box No. 135. National Archives of the United States.

²⁵ USCGC TANEY Ships Log, April-May 1945. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. Logs of Revenue Cutters and Coast Guard Vessels, 1945. TANEY 1945. Box No. 135. National Archives of the United States.

During this month-long period, at least 288 enemy planes attacked the ships in TANEY's vicinity, and at least 96 of these were destroyed.²⁶

After the war, TANEY proceeded to Japan, where she took part in the occupation of Wakayama, anchoring off the port city on 11 September and sending a working party ashore the next day. While anchored there, TANEY weathered a typhoon that swirled by on the 17th. She was, in fact, one of the few ships that stayed at her berth during the storm, her ground tackle holding well in the sticky clay bottom.

Departing Wakayama on 14 October, TANEY returned to the west coast of the United States, via Midway, and arrived at San Francisco on 29 October. Moving on for the east coast, TANEY transited the Panama Canal and arrived at Charleston, S.C., on 29 November.²⁷ During the ensuing period of conversion, the Coast Guard vessel was reconfigured as a patrol cutter. She now sported a main battery of a single-mount, 5-inch gun, a hedgehog, a twin 40-millimeter mount, and two 20-millimeter guns, in addition to depth charge tracks and projectors.²⁸

Upon shifting back to the west coast, TANEY was based at Alameda, California into the 1970's. Although she is listed with the ships receiving engagement stars for Korean service, she has no awards listed, indicating her presence only in a support role outside the geographical vicinity of Korean waters. She served as an ocean station weather ship; a fishery patrol vessel; and a search and rescue ship. Having been

²⁶Dr. Robert Browning, "The Day that Lives in Infamy: The Coast Guard at Pearl Harbor." *U.S. Coast Guard Reservist*. December 1999.

²⁷USCGC TANEY Ships Log, Oct.-Nov. 1945. RG 26 Records of the U.S. Coast Guard. Logs of Revenue Cutters and Coast Guard Vessels, 1945. TANEY 1945. Box No. 135. National Archives of the United States.

²⁸Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft of World War II*, 13.

reclassified back to gunboat, WPG-37, the ship was now reclassified again, this time as a high-endurance cutter, and received the designation of WHEC-37 in June of 1967.²⁹

In 1972, TANEY was shifted back to the east coast and was assigned duty on the last sea-going weather station, “Hotel”, off the coasts of Maryland and Virginia. Fitted with a Doppler Radar antenna used for storm tracking, housed in a distinctive bulbous dome fitted atop her pilothouse, TANEY deployed seven times yearly, conducting 21 deployments 200 miles off the coast. This last ocean station had been established to track storms threatening the middle states on the east coast that had often struck without warning. Eventually, the use of more sophisticated storm-tracking satellites and radars rendered this station obsolete. Hence, Ocean Station “Hotel” was closed down in 1977 and the TANEY gained the distinction of being the last Coast Guard cutter to serve on an ocean station.³⁰

From September 1976 through her decommissioning she was stationed at Portsmouth, VA and began law enforcement and SAR patrols. In December 1976 she assisted the sailboat *Capella* 200 miles off New York. In December 1979 TANEY helped seize the F/V *Eneida* for narcotics violations. On 15 January 1980 she seized the M/V *Amelia Isle* 425 miles east of Fort Pierce, FL, carrying 4 tons of contraband. In December 1980 she seized the British-flagged M/V *Party Doll* that was carrying 10 tons of contraband. Despite being the long arm of the law at sea she continued in her traditional Coast Guard humanitarian mission of search and rescue as well. On 16 November 1982 she rescued seven from the disabled ketch *Klarwasser* off the coast of

²⁹ Robert L. Scheina, *U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft, 1946-1990*, 27.

³⁰ Robert Erwin Johnson, *Guardians of the Sea*, 344.

North Carolina and rescued 19 migrants off the sailboat *Apri Dien Ni*. In May 1985 she assisted the disabled F/V *Northwind* 300 miles off New York. She also continued nabbing drug smugglers. On 30 September 1984 she seized the P/C *Thriller* in the Yucatan Channel. The *Thriller* carried 1,000 pounds of marijuana. Her final bust occurred on 4 October 1985 when she seized the M/V *Sea Maid I* that was towing a barge that carried 160 tons of marijuana 300 miles off Virginia.³¹ This seizure was the largest in US history at that time.

She was formally decommissioned on 7 December 1986 and turned over to the city of Baltimore, MD.³²

³¹ www.uscg.mil/hq/g-cp/history/WEBCUTTERS/Taney_1936.html

³² "Baltimore to Get World War II Service Cutter." *YARD News*. November 1986.

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